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OF
REV. R. SLUYTER.

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A MEMOIR

OF THE

REV. RICHARD SLUYTER,

LATE PASTOR OF THE REF. PROT. DUTCH CHURCH OF CLAVERACK, N. Y.

By R. ORMISTON CURRIE.

WITH

AN INTRODUCTION,

By the Rev. PHILIP MILLEDOLER, D. D.

LATE PRESIDENT OF RUTGERS COLLEGE, AND PROFESSOR OF DIDACTIC AND POLEMIC THEOLOGY IN THE THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY OF THE REF. PROT. DUTCH CHURCH.

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OF

CLAVERACK,

BY

THE AUTHOR.

PREFACE.

The accompanying Memoir of the Rev. Richard Sluyter was prepared at the request of his widow, and with the approbation of some of his personal friends. In its structure it is historical to an extent which perhaps may be unusual, but this was unavoidable. The paucity of materials out of which to construct it was such, that it either had to take this form or to remain unwritten. To some, however, this will be no objection, especially as, in our day, no inconsiderable degree of attention is given to historical inquiries.

The introductory essay, by the Rev. Dr. Milledoler, will not fail to receive a careful perusal. Its style, its matter, and the spirit which it breathes, render it well deserving of attention, and cannot fail to suggest matter for profitable reflection and judicious action in the settlement of pastors. It contains the lessons of wisdom, of age, and of long experience in

positions which give the venerable writer a claim to speak with some degree of authority.

The delay in the publication of the Memoir until this date, is the result of circumstances which the author could not control. He does not, however, regret it, inasmuch as he believes that the mellowing influence of time will prepare the minds of the people among whom Mr. Sluyter lived, and laboured, and died, better to appreciate what is said concerning him. And though the memoir was written with a special reference to its circulation among them, yet it is possible that it may fall into the hands of some others, in whose minds misconceptions exist as it regards the character, attainments, and usefulness of its subject. These, as being in part the result of information indirectly received, and in part of the discolourings imparted to it by the mediums through which it was communicated, it is desirable to remove; and the hope is indulged, that at least an approximation toward it has been made.

New Utrecht, L. I., September, 1846.

INTRODUCTION.

Rev. Robert O. Currie :

Rev. and dear Sir,

Having requested from me a prefix to your Biography of the Rev. Richard Sluyter, I send you herewith some thoughts on the Gospel Ministry, to be used, modified, or rejected, at your pleasure. That God may greatly bless you in your ministry, and have you and yours now and always under the safeguard of his most holy keeping, is the prayer of your friend and elder brother in the Lord,

Ph. Milledoler.

New-York, Oct. 21, 1845.

The lives of useful men is a department of literature which has been cultivated in all nations and ages. The biography of individuals is indeed so intimately connected with general history as to be inseparable from it. God ordinarily works by means. Those great events,

therefore, which have agitated, and in many instances changed the face of communities, nations, or the world, have not occurred without human instrumentality; and we should have a very imperfect view indeed of the changes themselves, if we knew nothing of the agents by whom they were accomplished.

In profane history, we have not only a record of events, but also of artists, sages, statesmen and warriors, who were prominently distinguished in them, and whose memories, on that account, have been embalmed by the world. In like manner, in the history of the Church, we have patriarchs and prophets, apostles and martyrs, reformers and pastors, who, by their writings, missionary labours, piety, eloquence and faithfulness, have eminently subserved the cause of Christ, and the best interests of their fellow men. With these stars, the whole firmament of the church is lighted up; or, to change the figure, we have an extended gallery of portraits, the likenesses of men who in their day were signally owned and blessed. On these the eye fastens with more than ordinary interest; and whilst we give glory to God for the splendid gifts with which they were invested, we are also powerfully excited to emulate

their diligence, their faith, their zeal, and deeds of noble bearing.

There is, however, an order of men in the Christian Church, whose names have seldom been celebrated, either in historical records or the minstrel's song. I allude to that whole class of retiring but faithful servants of God, who, seeking honour of God rather than men, have produced much fruit of personal holiness, and have largely contributed to the glory of Christ and the extension of his kingdom. Many of these, from an humble opinion of themselves, and a naturally unobtrusive disposition, have shrunk from, rather than courted, popular applause; whilst others, from their local situation, like the sweet mountain flower, have imparted their beauty and their fragrance within a very limited field of observation. Men like these, more especially in the ministry, though undervalued by the world, and unknown to fame, are, nevertheless, our productive working men, and constitute, in fact, the bone and muscle of the Church. To form ministers of this description may be considered a very light matter; but is it so in reality? In sending out missionaries to the heathen, for example, it has been thought that inferior qualifica-

tions would suffice. Experience, however, has long since demonstrated, that this work calls for literary and spiritual accomplishments of a very high order. The same observation will apply to many of our country parishes and churches. There are few such which have not their literary men. These, if Christians, have a right to expect, in their spiritual guides, a sound mind, connected with piety and learning. Even infidels, who are sometimes unhappily found in these associations, require consistency: a man, therefore, without learning and good common sense, will be pitied; and, without piety, will be despised. Of the unlearned, there are not only men of piety, who will expect to find a large share of it in their pastor, but also men of strong minds, who if they cannot learnedly criticise his productions, yet have an intuitive perception of their weakness or strength. This being the case, an acceptable pastor in town or village can be no ordinary man. If as a sacred orator—a counsellor of the Church—a man of God, and an ambassador of Christ, he must have weight; he must also have a corresponding weight of character. To say, then, of any man, that he has faithfully served, and for many years, that flock of Jesus

Christ over which the Holy Ghost had made him overseer—that he has during all that time laboured among them both in and out of season—that he has not only done this without just reproach, but also with many seals to his ministry—and that he retained to the last the love and confidence of his people—is to speak volumes in his praise.

Such, from the description of him in the Memoir which follows, must have been the life of the Rev. Richard Sluyter. He is described in the house of God, distributing the Bread of Life to his people; in the prayer meeting, that pulse which so truly indicates the weakness or strength, life or death spiritual of Christian associations; among the lambs of his flock, instructing them in their most holy faith; and in the chambers of the sick, the dying, or bereaved, directing, soothing, comforting. And who does not see, in all this, the importance of the servant, in the very nature, and manner, and glory of his work?

Such indeed is the life and character of many a retiring servant of God, little known, and less regarded by the world, but who nevertheless stands high in the esteem of Him who searches the heart—is the Fountain of honour—and will

eventually give to every one according to his work.

It is not very easy, on slight acquaintance, to form a proper estimate of ministerial worth. Some minds are carried away by pretension; others by talents more showy than solid—the mere tinsel, after all, of what they are supposed to represent. In this matter, nothing can be more true than the well-known proverb, "All is not gold that glitters."

We do not see why men may not write or speak as fluently on truth as on fiction, and more especially on truth expanding and soaring like that of Scripture, from first elements to inimitable sublimity. Nor do we see why they may not speak or write of Christian experience, not their own, indeed, but gathered from that of others. If idolatrous Rome could boast of her Fabricius—Athens of her Aristides—and Judea of her pharisees—it would be strange if men were not found in the Christian Church, who, though destitute of vital piety, should be their compeers in external morality.

The practised eye itself is sometimes deceived by an admirable likeness. Notwithstanding these appearances, however, there is really an immeasurable distance between the

true and the false, in men as well as things, to say nothing of those who, under religious pretexts have rioted in human misery; or, of those horrid shapes which poets feign to have stood at the entrance of Elysium, to disgust, terrify, or drive back those who would enter the abodes of the blessed. We shall confine our remarks to such, and such only, as, uncalled of God, have ventured upon the holy ministry.

Of these we observe, first of all, and that on scriptural authority, that it must be a cheerless work to preach an unknown Saviour. But if it be true, as it certainly is, that God has put enmity between the seed of the woman and the serpent—that the natural man comprehends not the things of the Spirit—and that the carnal mind is enmity to God—will it not inevitably follow, that such office-bearers can never be a blessing, and will ever be injurious to the house of God? They are neither true soldiers in the camp, nor faithful defenders of the citadel of God.

God may indeed honour his own word, though it fall from the lips of a perjured prophet; but this is not his ordinary course of working. On the contrary, we believe, on testimony of the Church, that the labours of un-

godly ministers are seldom, if ever, attended with success. We speak not now of loud professions, laboured imitations, or doubtful triumphs, but of true and actual success.

By adding to, or taking from the word of God—falsely accusing, or otherwise persecuting his people—deceitfully handling the word of God, and giving rise to all manner of reproach—they become either stumbling-blocks or snares to the souls of men; and the Holy One may well say, in rebuke of their pseudo services, "Who hath required this at your hands?"

If the view we have thus far taken, then, be correct, it will follow: That great vigilance should be exercised by the Church in the admission of men to the sacred office; that great care should be taken by aspirants themselves to that office, that they may not enter it uncalled of God; and that great circumspection should be used by vacant congregations in the settlement of their bishops. Considering it in its consequences to themselves and to posterity, there is no public act they can perform, which requires more serious deliberation, or more fervent prayer. But if falsehood in some instances so resembles truth, how shall they be

distinguished? Our Lord himself answers that question, where he says, "By their fruits ye shall know them."

There is something in truth itself more easily felt than described. If called to define it, we can only say, it is a secret, mysterious, and yet powerful influence of the Holy Ghost, commending the truth, as well as him who delivers it, to the hearts and consciences of men. This peculiarity, with special and united prayer for direction, careful inquiry, and due reflection, are landmarks which should never be lost sight of in the settlement of a minister.

On a review of the whole ground, we conclude:—That that pastor who faithfully preaches the word of God, and administers its sacraments—gives to all and each their portion in due season—carefully and diligently plies his work with earnest desire of success—fearlessly and impartially maintains scriptural discipline in the house of God, and adorns the doctrine of God his Saviour by an exemplary life, is a servant worthy of all human confidence and honour—a servant that God on earth will own and bless, and eventually and most assuredly crown with EVERLASTING GLORY.

MEMOIR

OF

REV. RICHARD SLUYTER.

CHAPTER I.

Birth of Mr. Sluyter—Account of his family—Resides with an elder brother—His aunt's testimony concerning him—His fondness of music—His efforts as a minister to improve sacred music—Introduces singing in the English language into the Lutheran Church, Sandlake—Teaches school at Poisten Kill and Greenbush—Studies medicine—Is converted, and joins the Church—Gives up the study of medicine—Studies for the ministry—Pursues classical studies under the Rev. Mr. Zabriskie—Enters Fairfield Academy—Enters the Theological Seminary—Resumes school teaching—Studies Hebrew under Rev. Dr. Banks—His opinion of his scholarship—His views in desiring to preach the Gospel—Licensed to preach—Summary.

THE Rev. RICHARD SLUYTER was born at Nassau, N. Y., on the third of September, 1787, and was the eleventh son of his father, William Sluyter, by his second wife, Mary Ray. On the maternal side, his family was not only highly respectable,

but also somewhat distinguished for talents. His uncle, William Ray, was a man of considerable note in the literary world. Some of his productions, both in prose and verse, are yet extant, in "The Miscellaneous Register," a work which he edited at Geneva, N. Y. Mr. Sluyter's own account of his parentage, drawn up some years since, is as follows: "My parentage is respectable, though not distinguished; and will probably bear as critical an investigation, in point of pedigree, back even 'to the land of our fathers' sepulchres,' as almost any, in the light of plain honesty and worth." His father once possessed a handsome estate, and settled his elder sons upon valuable farms. Subsequently, however, but through no fault of his own, his property designed especially for his younger children was much reduced. This placed them in early life in circumstances of dependance, but not of want, and threw them mainly upon their own resources to make their way in the the world.

At the age of nine years, Richard, the subject of this memoir, went to reside with an elder brother, at Sandlake, whose wife testifies of him: "He was the most dutiful boy I ever knew; moral, kind-hearted, naturally timid, and passionately fond of music, vocal and instrumental." His natural timidity he never lost, nor did his fondness for music ever in the least degree diminish. After he was inducted into the ministry, the subject of psalmody engaged his attention, and his efforts were constantly directed to the improvement of this delightful part of worship. He omitted no opportunity to impress upon the youth of his charge the importance of giving early and particular heed to it. Indeed, to induce them to do this, he expended much time and money.

Mr. Sluyter continued with his brother at Sandlake until he was eighteen years old, and during this time was instrumental in introducing singing in the English language into the Lutheran church of that place. He was also there awhile engaged

in teaching school. This occupation he also followed at Poisten Kill, and Greenbush. At this latter place, prior to his resuming teaching, he pursued for one year the study of medicine under Dr. Downs. About this time he was made the subject of renewing grace, and was received into the communion of the Reformed Protestant Dutch Church of Greenbush, then under the pastoral charge of the Rev. John L. Zabriskie. Nothing is known of his exercises before and after his conversion, beyond what is expressed in the change which ensued in his pursuits. He gave up the study of medicine, believing (and events have fully justified his conclusion) that he was called of God to preach the Gospel. In this belief he was confirmed by his pastor's counsels, backed as they were by efforts to enable him by teaching to procure the funds necessary to enter upon a course of study preparatory to the work of the ministry. "Being indigent," says that pastor, "and still desirous to receive an education, he availed

himself of every laudable means to obtain funds. He taught school; and being a popular teacher, the school, from small and unpromising beginnings, increased to sixty or seventy scholars." While teaching at Greenbush, "if he did not commence, he certainly prosecuted the study of Latin and Greek under the direction" of his pastor. Subsequently, he entered Fairfield Academy, Herkimer county, N. Y., for the purpose of pursuing classical studies; and while there, it is certified by the Principal, that he sustained "a high character for scholarship and good conduct." He left this institution, A. D. 1811, and about this time wrote to the late venerable Professor Livingston respecting his admission into the Theological Seminary of our Church, and referred him, for any additional information which he might desire, to the Rev. Mr. Zabriskie, then pastor of the church of Millstone, N. J. In his reply, Dr. Livingston acknowledges the receipt of a letter from Mr. Zabriskie, and adds: "In this he expresses his sen-

timents so decidedly in behalf of yourself, that I do not hesitate one moment to encourage you in the object of your wishes, and to promise you that I will most gladly assist you to the utmost of my power in prosecuting your theological studies."

At New-Brunswick, through the agency of his old pastor and unwavering friend, the way was prepared for Mr. Sluyter to resume teaching, as a means of support. It is proper, however, here to remark, that he was not left entirely to his own resources in the prosecution of study. His brother, who seems to have been warmly attached to him, and anxious for his success, supplied him in part with funds for this purpose.

The study of Hebrew Mr. Sluyter pursued with diligence, during the summers of 1813 and 1814, under Dr. Banks, at Florida, N. Y., who in his day was said to be one of the best Hebrew scholars in the country. In the study of Hebrew, the Rev. Mr. Kissam says, "he became quite a proficient, and received testimonials to

that effect from his teacher." He also adds, that "Dr. B. thought highly of him as a general scholar, and of his future prospects in the Church." Of his character for piety while at Florida, he thus speaks: "At Florida, I became intimately acquainted with Mr. Sluyter, and the more I knew of him, the more I loved him. We were room-mates, and sweet and refreshing were the daily devotions in which he led. His piety was ardent, though modest, forming him to a proper temper and proper conduct toward God and his fellow creatures. Truth had evidently sanctified his heart agreeably to our Lord's prayer: 'Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth.'"

With respect to Mr. Sluyter's views in wishing to preach the Gospel, we know but little. He has left nothing in writing by which a knowledge of them can be obtained. The testimony, however, of Messrs. Zabriskie and Kissam, in relation to this matter, is satisfactory; especially as, in the whole course of his ministry, he

seems to have been influenced by the considerations which they say governed him, in desiring "the office of a bishop." Says the former—"He desired to obtain an education, that he might enter into the service of the sanctuary, and bear the messages of peace and reconciliation to a perishing world. This was the object of his ardent desire, and unremitting exertions." The latter writes: "He had not himself high expectations, and often said he should be satisfied to labour wherever his Master might place him. In anticipating those high and holy services in which for years he was so sincerely and so happily engaged, the prayer of Moses when ordered to depart with his people to the land of promise often escaped his lips: 'If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence.' That presence did accompany him (though with intervening clouds) to the closing scene of life, and in its fulness and glory he is now perfectly happy." But not to anticipate what may be more properly said hereafter, it may be ob-

served, that Mr. Sluyter continued during the prescribed term of study in the Theological Seminary at New-Brunswick; was highly esteemed by the venerable Professor Livingston; and on being furnished by him with the usual certificate, was admitted to examination before the Classis of New-Brunswick, on the 18th of May, 1815, and licensed to preach the Gospel.

In view of what has now been stated, it is evident that Mr. Sluyter's piety was sincere and ardent; that his natural abilities and literary acquirements were not only highly respectable, but also such as to give rise to the expectations which many indulged respecting his prospective usefulness in the Church; that his design in wishing to be admitted to the ministry was not to make himself a name, but to exalt and honour his Redeemer, and to be instrumental in saving souls; that though for lack of means he had not a little difficulty to encounter, in sustaining himself in the prosecution of study, yet so intent was he upon obeying what he believed to be a

call of God to preach the Gospel, that it did not move him from his purpose to go forward. The funds which a kind-hearted brother could not supply, he procured by his own exertions.

CHAPTER II.

Preaches as a Candidate in the church of Claverack—Called as the colleague of the Rev. Mr. Gebhard—Reasons for hesitating to accept the call—Terms of the call—preaches in Ghent—Condensed view of his field of labour—Obstacles existing in it.

After receiving from the Classis of New-Brunswick a commission to preach, among other churches which Mr. Sluyter visited with a view to a settlement, was that of Claverack, N. Y. This church was then under the pastoral charge of the Rev. John G. Gebhard. He was successor to the Rev. Johannes Casparus Fryenmoet,* was settled over the church, A. D. 1776, and continued its sole pastor up to

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* From the records of the church of Claverack having been made evidently by a variety of persons prior to the settlement over it of the Rev. Mr. Fryenmoet, it is probable that he was its first stated pastor. Be this, however, as it may, either as pastor or as a stated supply, the church, as its records show, had his services for the space of fourteen years, or from 1756 to 1770.

November, 1815, and, conjointly with Mr. Sluyter, until near the time of his decease, a period of about forty-nine years. He preached alternately in the High and Low Dutch languages; but as in the schools the English language had supplanted these, they gradually ceased to be well understood. As a consequence, there was a growing conviction throughout the congregation that English preaching was required. Happily this was participated in by the venerable Gebhard, and he cordially coöperated with the Consistory in their efforts to settle a colleague whose ministrations should be performed in that language. Accordingly, as the president of Consistory, he formally invited Mr. Sluyter to preach in the church of Claverack, in September, 1815; and, as an inducement for him to accept the invitation, added, "It may prove to be an advantage to you finally."

At the time designated, he preached, and with great acceptance, as appears from numerous letters which were subse-

quently addressed to him by the most intelligent, active, and influential persons in the church. The result was, an immediate effort by the Consistory toward calling him as the colleague of their aged pastor. About the same time, the united churches of Bethlehem and Coeymans were endeavouring to secure his services. This was one impediment in the way of the Consistory of the church of Claverack, when they made to him overtures to serve them in the Gospel. Another and a more formidable one was found in the fact, that their church, though nominally belonging to the Reformed Protestant Dutch denomination, was really independent. Mr. Sluyter was unwilling to do any thing toward perpetuating its independency; and until, therefore, he received formally from the Consistory the assurance of their willingness to come under the care of the Classis of Rensselaer, he did not accept their call. This was conveyed to him in a letter from the Rev. Mr. Gebhard, in which he says, "All efforts which hitherto have been

made to bring this congregation under the Classis, have proved abortive; but this is the first and most favourable opportunity to effect that purpose. The present Consistory is not averse to it." Farther on he adds, and I quote it both to show that in the congregation there was not entire unanimity as to coming under the care of Classis, and the impression which Mr. Sluyter had made by his preaching: "I am confident that the high opinion which the whole congregation entertains of your person and talents will readily overcome the caprice of a few individuals. This circumstance is another argument in our behalf to give our call a favourable consideration, and finally to accept it. You alone will then be entitled to the merit of having brought this congregation under the Classis. May the Lord incline your heart to see the necessity of bestowing your labour in his vineyard among us!"

As colleague of the venerable Gebhard, it was stipulated in the call which was presented to Mr. Sluyter, that he should

preach "three fourths of the Sabbaths of each and every year in the Reformed Dutch Church of Claverack." That the other "fourth of the Sabbaths" might be occupied, and his salary increased, the Reformed Dutch Church of Hillsdale, then belonging to the Classis of Rensselaer,* united in the call with the church of Claverack. But though three fourths of his time and preaching, by the terms of his call, were to be given to the latter, yet it was with the express understanding that, at the commencement of his ministry, only two fourths would be exacted of him. Every fourth Sabbath, therefore, he was permitted to employ himself where he might deem it most expedient. As, however, when the call upon him was made out, the preliminary steps had been taken toward

* It is not certain that the church of Hillsdale was under the supervision of the Classis of Rensselaer. The Rev. B. B. Westfall, recently deceased, who had the means of acquiring correct information, in a published article says, that it "remained independent of any ecclesiastical body."

building the First Reformed Protestant Dutch Church of Ghent, it was suggested to him that he "might bestow a fourth part" of his annual labours in "that portion of Christ's vineyard, especially as long as Mr. Gebhard continued preaching." Subsequently, (and doubtless mainly through the agency of him who made it,) this suggestion was carried into effect; and for "more than seven years," and until the settlement of the Rev. P. S. Wyncoop over that church as pastor, Mr. Sluyter was its stated supply.

From the imperfect view which has now been given of the extent of the field of ministerial labour upon which, on accepting the united call of the churches of Claverack and Hillsdale, Mr. Sluyter was expected to enter, it will readily be conceded that there was work enough before him to tax to the utmost his mental and bodily energies. While its acceptance was pending, he received, from a reliable source, the information that "Claverack, exclusive of Hillsdale, had more than five

hundred families in it."* But Claverack and Hillsdale (or that part of it which composed his congregation) united, did not comprise the whole of his pastoral charge. Included in it were the corporate limits of the city of Hudson, without the city proper. Beside, some few families who resided in the city were attendants upon his ministrations, and subject to his supervision. In fine, where once he stood alone, (with the exception of the assistance of the Rev. Mr. Gebhard, which was limited almost entirely to preaching on the Sabbath,) several ministers of our own and other denominations of Christians, are now constantly, usefully and fully employed.

The extent of the sphere of Mr. Sluyter's ministerial work, however, was not the only nor the most formidable obstacle which was visible even to a superficial observer. It embraced a great deal of new

* The town of Ghent, which was not at this time constituted, was for the most part embraced in that of Claverack.

ground, or (what is scarcely to be preferred to it) of old ground, which, through neglect of tillage, might almost be said to have become an uncultivated waste. One who was a first fruit of his ministry,* and from his subsequent attendance upon him as he went from neighbourhood to neighbourhood preaching the Gospel, had an opportunity to learn what was the moral and religious aspect of things, testifies, "Discipline was altogether out of the question, and it was no uncommon thing for church members to engage in horse-racing, and other like gambols. Deadness and stupidity" were to a great extent characteristics "of professors of religion, and moral desolation prevailed over the whole field of his labour." Now it was these things, rather than the wide sphere in which to "make full proof of his ministry," which were the great existing impediments. Meantime there were not wanting some in the church, who, like Caleb, had "another spi-

* Rev. B. B. Westfall.

rit," and saw and deplored the ungodliness of professed Christians, and the presumptuous wickedness of transgressors; and their solicitude for the purification and reformation of the Church, and the salvation of sinners—their prayers, and the holiness of their "walk and conversation"—together with the gracious promises of God to the faithful servant—were among the things which induced Mr. Sluyter to listen to their urgent requests to become "their pastor and teacher," and animated him in the performance of an amount of work which, apart from its peculiar difficulties, was sufficient to break down a man of less resolution and fortitude, and of less vigour, both of mind and body.

CHAPTER III.

Accepts the united call of the churches of Claverack and Hillsdale—Early decision as to the mode in which his duties should be performed—Marriage—Results of his preaching—Preliminary work to be done—Encouragement—Character of his preaching—First revival, A. D. 1821—Opposition to it—Fruits of it—His account of it—Revivals of 1822 and 1823—Their effects—Subsequent declension in religion—Trials of Mr. S.—Causes of them—Pastoral relation to the church of Hillsdale dissolved—On Mr. Gebhard's ceasing to preach, becomes sole pastor of the church of Claverack—Death of Mr. Gebhard—Obituary—Affecting scene.

The objections which Mr. Sluyter had made to accepting the call of the churches of Claverack and Hillsdale, having at length been removed, he signified to their Consistories his acceptance of it. This was followed by his examination for ordination to the office of a bishop, by the Classis of Rensselaer, and his ordination in the church of Claverack on the 26th of December, 1815. Being then in the prime of life, and in the enjoyment of excellent health, he entered upon his work, as "the ambassador of Christ," with the

evident purpose of "spending and being spent" for the people of his charge. The cursory survey which at the first he was enabled to take of the sphere in which he was called "to fulfil the whole work of the Gospel ministry," convinced him, that many who expected at his hands to receive "the bread of life," would die without it, if he confined his ministrations to the sanctuary and the Sabbath. Accordingly, he concluded to go about preaching the Gospel, especially in those parts of his congregations which were most remote from the churches in which they respectively worshipped. And being naturally of an ardent temperament, he displayed in excess the zeal for which young men are apt to be distinguished at their first setting out in life. "I have known him to preach," says the late Rev. Mr. Westfall, "for months in succession, almost every night in the week, and visit families in the day time."

Amid his various and increasing duties, however, he paused to be united in mar-

riage on the 6th of August, 1816, to Lydia Mary W. Schureman.* But he merely paused. As soon as he returned to the scene of his labours, he resumed them with his characteristic energy. Intent upon advancing the glory of God in the salvation of souls, he was literally "instant in season and out of season," in preaching the gospel; yet, at the first, the results could

* Mrs. Sluyter was the daughter of the late Hon. James Schureman, of New Brunswick, N. J.—a man in whom were blended the qualities of the patriot and the christian. He was a graduate of Queens, (now Rutgers College;) served as a soldier in the revolutionary war—was engaged in battle on Long Island as one of a company which he had been mainly instrumental in raising; was afterward taken prisoner near New Brunswick, and imprisoned in that city, and also in the "Sugar-House" in New-York, from which, however, he made his escape. Having by these services proved his patriotism, he was elected a member of the first and second Congress under the New Constitution; was subsequently chosen a United States Senator for six years, and in A. D. 1812 was again elected to Congress as the colleague of the late Hon. Richard Stockton. Though he did not until a late period of his life make a public profession of faith in Christ, yet he was "always serious, an attendant upon, and a liberal supporter of the church."

scarcely be said to equal his expenditure of time and effort. But this was to be expected. As when a man settles himself in a new country, or in a country which, through want of proper tillage is overgrown with briers and shrubs much preparatory work is required before it can be reasonably supposed that the earth will yield an increase covering, and more than covering the expense of its cultivation; so also, when a minister settles in a congregation where there is much fallow ground to be broken up, he has "need of patience" to wait for the promised blessing. He must look for obstacles in the lifelessness, and even ungodliness of professors of religion; in the bold and accumulating wickedness of the unregenerate; in the prejudices of ignorance steeped in error, as it respects the nature and extent of divine requirements, as well as in the remoteness of many from the church, and their want of facilities to resort there, to use and profit by the means of grace. These obstacles, and others akin to them, Mr. Sluyter encountered at the

beginning of his ministry; and their removal was not the work of a day, or even of a year. Still as he endeavoured this by the divinely appointed instrumentality of the gospel, he persevered even amid opposition and reproach "in holding forth the word of life." It sufficed for him that it was written, "in due season we shall reap if we faint not." Meantime, however, he was not left without encouragement in his work. "His preaching," says the Rev. Mr. Westfall, "was made to bear with point and energy upon the evil practices that prevailed in the church; discipline began to be exercised, and soon it became reproachful for a professor of religion to be seen at the revelries of the day. The standard of morals was elevated in the community, a spirit of piety began to breathe in the church, family altars began to be erected, and prayer-meetings were established in different sections of the congregation." He farther testifies: "Many had their attention arrested, and some interesting conversions followed."

These perceptible fruits of his ministrations served to animate Mr. Sluyter amid a great variety of discouragements, and to make apparent the fact that "the way of the Lord among the people of his charge was in a gradual, but sure course of preparation. And at length, after more than five years of continuous and faithful effort, in February, 1821, the indications became unequivocal that God had begun to pour out his Spirit. This year, indeed, was memorable for the descent of the Holy Ghost on all the churches in the surrounding region. Among these were the churches of Nassau, Kinderhook, Hudson, Catskill and Coxsackie. As it respects more particularly the church of Claverack, the year 1821 may be said to form an era in its history. Never before had God so signally revealed himself to it "in the power of his word and Spirit." But his work then, as in the days of the apostles, met with opposition. Not only when its first fruits became visible, but also when it was most pervading and controling in its influence, it could in

truth be affirmed, "and there are many adversaries." So firmly convinced, however, was Mr. Sluyter, that it was of God, that in a letter written early in March, to his wife, then absent on a visit to her parents, he said, "I cannot yield to any opposition, for I know that the Lord is on our side." Nor did he yield, even though as a consequence he found arrayed against him members of the church as well as men of the world. The former never having witnessed a revival of religion, in most cases, doubtless, assumed the attitude of opposers, "ignorantly through unbelief;" the latter spake "evil of the things that they" understood "not," because the church was increased by a thinning of their ranks, in a manner as effectual as it was unusual. But if in the opposition which Mr. Sluyter encountered, there was much which was trying to his feelings, and might have proved disheartening to a man less ardent and sanguine, there was also much in the richness of the blessing of God upon his ministrations, which was

encouraging and sustaining. Christians acquired new views of the power and grace of God; had their errors corrected and their prejudices removed; saw illustrated in a manner the most convincing the prevalence and "blessedness of prayer," and learned to appreciate more highly the gospel, as the instrumentality ordained by God to save sinners, and promote the sanctification of believers. Had these been the only fruits of the outpouring of the Spirit, it would be difficult to over estimate their value to the church of Claverack; but beside, during the year one hundred and twenty-five members were added to it on confession.

The following is the account which Mr. Sluyter himself gave of the revival of 1821: "This work made its appearance about the middle of February, in the village of Claverack, after being long prayed for, fondly expected, and strongly anticipated from the manifest movings of the Spirit of God upon the consciences of several who had been attendants upon the means of

grace previous to the day on which a revival was announced to have commenced. It was preceded by a spirit of prayer poured out upon the church, which was unusual and solemn. Nothing in the whole progress of the work has appeared wild or enthusiastic, nor was it discoverable that its spread was through the medium of sympathy."

The years 1822 and 1823, were also periods in which the church of Claverack was revived, and the accessions to it on confession were numerous. But these seem to have been rather the continuous fruits of the work of grace, commenced in A. D., 1821, than distinct seasons in which the Holy Spirit was poured out. And this is a feature of the first revival of religion in Claverack which may be contemplated with pleasure, for it confirms the testimony of Mr. Sluyter, that "its spread was" not "through the medium of sympathy." No person will contend for the extension of this throughout a period of three years. Equally, if not more preposterous would

it be for any one to maintain that human machinery, no matter how well devised, nor how efficiently plied, continued to extend its effects for so long a space of time. Much has been said of its power and its results, but never have its most ardent advocates pretended that for three successive years it continued to produce its fruits.

Now when it is remembered what was the state of things in the church of Claverack, when Mr. Sluyter was settled over it as pastor, and what it continued to be, up even to the time when it pleased God to pour out his spirit upon it—when it is remembered that the opposition to the revival was strenuous and determined; that it was regarded and spoken of as the work not of God, but of man; and that it was confidently predicted that it would "come to nought," it is easy to perceive that its continuance, though with diminished power, through three years, must have been of very great advantage. It did indeed result in the removal from the minds of

christians of all scepticism as to its origin, its nature, and the blessedness of its fruits; in giving more elevation to the tone of their piety, and more circumspection and consistency to their walk; in increasing the degree of their influence, and in making them the fast friends of revivals of religion. As it respected the world, its effect was to falsify their predictions, to stagger, if not to uproot their faith in their own declarations that it was the work of man, and measurably to overcome their opposition, or rather to make it powerless. As the result, therefore, of the first revival of religion in the church of Claverack, Mr. Sluyter was placed upon vantage ground. By it God set the seal of his approbation upon his ministry, and virtually proclaimed him to be an approved and faithful servant. Beside, he made it subsequently contribute toward his encouragement, comfort, and success.

After the fruits of the revival of the years 1821, '22, and '23 had been gathered in, though God did not leave himself

without witness that by his Spirit he was present with the church, giving efficacy to his own truth, yet it gradually became more and more apparent that christians were losing their "first love"—were satisfying themselves with the mere formal discharge of religious duties, and indifferent about the salvation of sinners. The usual effect followed as it respects the impenitent. They waxed more careless, more bold in sinning, and more regardless of the calls and invitations of mercy, by which it was sought to persuade them. Nevertheless, the moral and religious aspect of things differed widely from what it had been previous to the late revival. But this fact, interesting and important as it was, did not, could not overbalance the causes for mourning both within and without the church. And during the period intervening between the years 1823 and 1831, when God again poured out his Spirit, Mr. Sluyter experienced some of his severest trials. These were occasioned partly by the causes which have been

mentioned, and were of a character to affect him deeply: so that if during the progress of the revival in A. D. 1821, he could write to Mrs. Sluyter, "My heart is full of this glorious work; I have a thousand things to tell you about the passing scenes of this day of God's merciful visitation; I do not know how to pray and praise the Lord enough for his kindness and love to me, in giving me health and strength to perform the arduous duties involved in a work of revival"—he now found reason often to exclaim, "Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" As it respects the other things by which he was tried, as a notice of them could subserve no good end, it is best that the mantle of oblivion be thrown over them.

During the period of Mr. Sluyter's ministry which is now under review, some things occurred which deserve notice. These were, the cessation from preaching and the death of his venerable colleague, and the dissolution of his pastoral connec-

tion with the church of Hillsdale. It was contemplated by the Consistory of the church of Claverack, in the settlement of a colleague to the Rev. Mr. Gebhard, to claim the whole of his time and services, when through growing infirmities the latter should be unable longer to preach. In April, A. D. 1825, this period arrived; and the Rev. Mr. Gebhard having been declared *emeritus* by the Classis, and the stipulations of Mr. Sluyter's call, so far as they respected the Consistory of the church of Hillsdale, having been annulled, the latter thenceforward, up to the time of his death, was the sole pastor of the church of Claverack. As, however, his pastoral relation to the church of Hillsdale had been productive of much comfort to himself, and of much good to it, it was not without regret mutually felt and expressed, that he parted from it, and left the people, "as sheep without a shepherd." Nor did he ever cease to take an interest in its welfare.

Mr. Gebhard did not long survive the

relinquishment of the active duties of his calling. "He was gathered to his fathers" on the 16th of August, 1826, in the seventy-seventh year of his age, and the fifty-fourth of his ministry. From a brief obituary of him, which was published in "The Magazine of the Reformed Dutch Church," it appears that "he was born on the 2d of February, A. D. 1750, at Waldorf, in Germany. He received his classical education at Heidelberg, and completed his theological studies and was licensed to preach at Utrecht, in Holland. In A. D. 1771 he emigrated to the United States, and officiated in the ministry in Pennsylvania for about three years. In the month of January, 1774, he was called to the German Reformed Church of the city of New-York, now under the pastoral care of the Rev. J. S. Ebaugh, and continued their pastor until 1776, when he, together with many others of said church, fled before the British. In 1776 he was called to the pastoral charge of the Reformed Protestant Dutch Church of Claverack, N. Y." He

was a learned and a good man, and in the fullest sense of the term a gentleman.* He was always modest, dignified, courteous and affable in his intercourse with others. He was, beside, distinguished for his sagacity, his knowledge of human nature, his prudence, and his self-control. He was eminently a man of peace, and in practice conformed to the exhortation, "Let us follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another." And it is due to truth to say, that it was as much owing to him as to Mr. Sluyter, that there never occurred the "least rupture" between them. It was because peace was their mutual aim, that it was preserved during the period

* The writer is indebted to the Rev. Mr. Ebaugh for matter to supply what was wanting in the obituary of Mr. Gebhard, as it was originally published; and also for the information derived from the records of his church, that Mr. G. was recalled to it, "but declined accepting the call solely on account of the largeness of his family, and the inadequate support offered him in it."

of their collegiate connection, and until the death of Mr. Gebhard.

The writer, who was kindly taken by the hand, and encouraged by Mr. Gebhard when he had resolved to devote himself to the work of the ministry, cannot forbear to advert to one scene in which that venerable servant of God was an actor, and which is vividly impressed on his mind. It was the Sabbath, and the church had come together to remember Christ in "the ordinance of the Holy Supper." Just about the time the elements were to be distributed, he came into the church, it is believed for the last time. At any rate, the writer never saw him there afterward. As he opened the door, every eye was directed toward him. His gait was erect, but his countenance was wan, and every feature of it pointed him out as a candidate for the tomb. He took his seat in front of the pulpit, and at the right of the table. And as he sat there contemplating the scene before him, and doubtless anticipating with confidence and joy

of heart the arrival of the moment when he should be welcomed home to glory with the plaudit, "Well done, good and faithful servant," the peace within was shadowed forth in the heavenly serenity which was depicted on his brow. The services proceeded. "He ate of the bread and drank of the wine in remembrance of Christ." He arose in his place amid silence like that of the grave, and delivered the last address which he ever made at the communion table, or to the church to which he had ministered for about half a century. He spoke in the Dutch language, with earnestness yet with deliberation, and in a manner such as became him, standing on the borders of eternity. In the tones of his voice there was something sepulchral. He seemed like one from the other world, who had just appeared to deliver a message from God and return. And when I looked on him standing forth as the "ambassador of Christ," remembered how often he had said, "I would rather wear out than rust out," and saw the lamp of

life then evidently flickering in the socket, I experienced sensations which for the time were overpowering, and cannot be described.

CHAPTER IV.

Revival of 1831—Four days' meetings—Their results—Revivals of 1833 and '35—Their fruits—Result to Mr. S. of injudiciously uniting with the Baptists in a protracted meeting—Revival of 1838—His account of it—Revival of 1842—His account of it—Extent of the several revivals—State of religion during the intervals between them—Seeks no notoriety on account of his success—His manner, in seasons of revival—His errors and excesses—Causes of them assigned.

After eight years of comparative barrenness of the fruits of the Spirit, the church of Claverack was again, in the year 1831, favoured with a revival of religion. This was the year in which "four days' meetings" began to be held in many churches of different denominations; and it must be confessed, generally with the happiest effect. The perversions and abuses of them which eventually operated to their disadvantage, and caused them sometimes to be the source of evil, rather than of good to the church of Christ, were then comparatively unknown. Having made himself acquainted with their character, and the

mode of conducting them, Mr. Sluyter, prompted by the consideration that "in almost every case they were followed with awakenings in the church, and in the hopeful conversion of many," resolved, with the approbation of his Consistory, to hold "a four days' meeting" in the church of Claverack. But let him speak for himself. He says, "The church in Claverack after much earnest prayer and solemn deliberation, resolved to hold 'a four days' meeting,' which began on the 17th of August, 1831, and continued until the 21st. Every day witnessed a crowded auditory, and great solemnity and interest seemed to rest on the minds of all; and a considerable degree of revival in the church prevailed for some weeks, and many were brought into the kingdom."

The revival of A. D. 1831, was happy in its influence upon the church, and in a high degree inspiriting to Mr. Sluyter. It was followed by another in A. D. 1833, of which the fruit was a large accession to the church. In A. D. 1835, God again

poured out his Spirit; and to the number of professed christians, forty-four were added. Of these last two revivals it may in truth be said, that they were a great blessing to the church of Claverack, both in consequence of their immediate and subsequent fruits. The former were visible in its increase by new accessions from the world, and in the upbuilding of christians, by means of the rich communications of grace which were imparted to them. The latter were discoverable in the higher appreciation on the part of the people generally of the house of God, its ministrations and ordinances, and their consequent more diligent attendance upon public worship. At no period of his ministry had Mr. Sluyter greater cause to be gratified on account of the number of persons who regularly sat under his preaching, than during that which succeeded these revivals. In connection with the revival of A. D. 1835, there was one thing which contributed much toward this, namely, the difficulty in which he became involved with the

Baptists, on account of injudiciously uniting with them in the holding of a protracted meeting in the very heart of his own congregation. This operated to awake in the people the dormant feelings of kindness and affection for their pastor, and to rally them around him with the determination to encourage and sustain him. The pain, therefore, which the trial occasioned him, was more than compensated by the discovery which it enabled him to make of the place which he retained in the hearts of the people.

In A. D. 1838, Mr. Sluyter was again permitted to rejoice in seeing an abundant blessing poured out upon the people of his charge. Of all the revivals which occurred under his ministry, this was the one which he seemed to regard with the most interest. He could scarcely advert to it without becoming excited in the recollection of what God had wrought. His report of it is as follows:—"It is with great pleasure and satisfaction that I am able to record the result of a great work of God

in the church of Claverack, which commenced about the middle of January, 1838, in the east part of the town called Centreville.* In that neighbourhood of the congregation I have been accustomed to preach every alternate Sabbath, in the afternoon, for some years; and for some weeks previous to the breaking out of the work, much solemnity prevailed under the preaching of the word, and an uncommon spirit of prayer among christians. Two little praying bands separated about a mile apart, formed a purpose of coming together in one meeting, and to pray every night in succession during one week, for the outpouring of the Spirit to begin on Wednesday. This pious design was introduced by a request that I should come and preach in the neighbourhood once or twice that week, which was done on Monday and Tuesday evenings preceding. A deep interest was very evidently felt, and

* Now Mellenville.

much of divine influence was realized by many hearts. On the night of the fourth meeting for prayer in succession, the Holy Spirit seemed to come down as on the day of Pentecost, and filled the place where they were assembled. It was a memorable night, and something like *twenty-one* souls were brought under deep conviction, and cried out for mercy. I entered into the field on the following week, and great power from on high reigned over the whole community; and in the space of two weeks more than *sixty* souls were rejoicing in hope. A protracted meeting was held in the church, and the work spread over the congregation generally, so that in every part of it some precious souls were converted, and the people in the whole region of country around were impressed." Another season of revival, and the last, under Mr. Sluyter's ministry, was enjoyed by the church of Claverack in A. D. 1842.

In relation to this revival, under date of March 1, Mr. Sluyter wrote as follows to a son-in-law. "We have had a very in-

teresting work of grace in this place this winter. Evident tokens of the operations of the Spirit of God appeared in December, in the north and east parts of my congregation, which drew me out in unusual labours to cherish and promote the work. The distant points have been brought together in a great degree, and a feeling of general interest spread over the church. This work has been preceded by a fervent spirit of prayer among christians, and attended with great harmony and love. Last Sabbath we celebrated the Lord's Supper, when thirty-one united with the church on confession of their faith. It was a blessed season, indeed. A deep solemnity reigned over a crowded auditory; and what greatly deepened the sacredness of the scene, was the baptism of seven adult persons, some of whom were of the first respectability in society. This was one of the good days of the Lord in this ancient church, several of which it has been my high privilege to see and enjoy during my ministry among this people. At Mellen-

ville, there is now a deeply interesting state of things. Sixteen souls have been recently converted, and the work is advancing. I shall commence a series of meetings in that church on Wednesday of this week, (God willing,) and may the Lord bless the means that may be employed for the conversion of precious souls."

On the 13th of March, Mr. Sluyter wrote to a son, "I have been holding a succession of meetings at Mellenville, for two weeks. There has been quite a serious time in that church, and upwards of twenty souls have been hopefully converted. Among the means which produced serious thoughtfulness in the congregations of Claverack and Mellenville, was the prevalence of the scarlet fever, which occasioned an unusual mortality among children. At Mellenville, particularly, it was desolating; no less than eleven mothers having been called to mourn the loss of their children, between January 1 and March 1."

In addition to the foregoing, he writes

concerning the revival of 1842, "Indeed, there has been a very solemn time in this region; more than two hundred and fifty have been converted since the beginning of the winter, and have connected themselves with different churches."

The revivals with which the church of Claverack was favoured under Mr. Sluyter's preaching, it may be here remarked, were some of them general, extending over the whole congregation, and some of them limited to particular portions of it.

It need scarcely be added, that the intervals between the several revivals were characterized by some degree of stagnation in the religious feelings of christians, and some want of perseverance and fidelity in their doing the will of the Lord, as well as by apparent and growing indifference on the part of sinners, as it respected their eternal well-being. These, though they need not, and should not be, yet usually have been the results following in the train of revivals of religion. In part they arise from a law of our nature which

renders it impossible, without prejudice to health and usefulness, to keep the mind for a great length of time highly excited, in reference to any topic. Meantime, however, the church gradually increased in numbers and in grace, in the use of ordinary and divinely appointed means. If on this point there was no other evidence save the fact stated by Dr. Gosman at the funeral of Mr. Sluyter, it would be conclusive. He said, "His ministry was eminently successful. Nearly 1,100 souls have been received into the communion of this church.

In this connection it is proper to state, that though Mr. Sluyter's ministry was unusually distinguished for revivals of religion, yet his humility was equal to his success. He never "sounded a trumpet before him"—never sought notoriety by publications of what God through his agency was accomplishing.

On the subject of publishing accounts of revivals, Mr. Sluyter expressed himself as follows, in a letter to the author: "With

respect to your remarks on the subject of withholding information from the public at the early stages of a revival, for fear that the church might think more highly than she ought to think of the hopeful work, I partly agree with you and partly not.

"I acknowledge that much injury has arisen through indiscretion and untempered zeal, in times of the evident nearness of God's power in quickening and reviving the souls of men. To publish exaggerated accounts, and to make more of the work than the Spirit of God warrants us to make, is wrong. Although such accounts may be the result of ardent wishes and pious hope, in view of an extensive work of grace; yet if the intelligence published be not strictly and faithfully the history of facts as they exist, it is not true, and consequently cannot be right. This is an error, on the one hand, which has doubtless hurt the character of religious revivals in no small degree. Those who heard the report at a distance, and had raised expectations, have been disappointed when

they have come to see what God had wrought. The wicked have taken advantage of such things, and turned them to an evil account. I am, however, apprehensive that much needless fear is indulged by many on this subject—that too much squeamishness is often felt and manifested by many ministers and christians respecting revivals of religion. If the movements of the Holy Spirit are manifest in awakening the Church and exciting the alarm of the impenitent in any place, I see no necessity of studied silence on the subject. If *one only* be converted, it excites 'joy in heaven;' and that one may not, and cannot be silent, but in the language of the Psalmist, is constrained to say, 'Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul.' May not, then, private communication be sent to those 'who for Zion's sake will not hold their peace, and for Jerusalem's sake will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth?' It

would be a comfort to them to hear unvarnished intelligence of the Lord's power and goodness to others, and might prove a mean of exciting them to unusual zeal and prayer, and be attended with a blessing upon them and theirs."

Moreover, the revivals of religion, of which mention has been made, were not the products of other men's labours. The Rev. B. B. Westfall, in the published notice before referred to, says, "None could be attributed to the preaching of another man. It pleased the Spirit of God signally to own his ministrations; and in more than one instance, to come down upon the listening audience with heart-melting power." With respect to the manner of Mr. Sluyter, in seasons of religious awakening, he speaks as follows: "It was the writer's privilege to be among the first fruits of his ministry. And for some time I was with him as Timothy with Paul; and if ever I have been successful in bringing souls to Christ, much of it must be attributed to the lessons I received in

this school of my first discipleship. The firm grasp with which he would lay hold of the hand of a humble inquirer or careless sinner, with the look of love and compassion, whilst he would plead and expostulate with him on the necessity of an immediate submission to God, seldom failed of producing its effects; and as he pointed out the way of life and salvation through the efficacy of Christ's blood, I have seen stout hearts break and yield to the claims of the Saviour."

In concluding the notice of the revivals, with which, under the ministry of Mr. Sluyter the church of Claverack was blessed, it would be claiming for him a degree of perfection to which he made no pretension, to say, that, in his doings with respect to them he committed no errors, fell into no excesses. He did both, as he was himself aware, and on more than one occasion ingenuously admitted. In his preaching he was sound in the faith; but in his measures he sometimes went too far. There is, however, some excuse to be

found for him in the fact that he was naturally excitable, ardent and impulsive. Hence, no scene was more congenial to him than that in which men were absorbed in the great work of seeking salvation. Standing among such, he was in his element, and no where else appeared to better advantage as the "ambassador of Christ." It was then that he displayed his skill in anatomizing the human heart; exposed in a most convincing manner to unbelievers the refuges of lies in which they were trusting; exhibited the Divine law in its nature, extent, spirituality and perfection, and preached Jesus "as the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." And all this he did often in strains of impassioned, persuasive and commanding eloquence. But if in a revival the state of things was congenial to his feelings, it must also be conceded that he was sometimes rather under the control of these than of his judgment. The alarms of conscience produced by convictions of sin, the agonizing cries for

mercy—the gushing tears of penitence—the joy arising from a sense of sins forgiven, and the praises to God for his displays of the wonders of redeeming love, were fitted to excite, and did excite him in a high degree. At such times, when it might almost be said that his feelings took a hue from every passing scene, his acts and measures were not always governed by the rules of strict propriety. But this, from his peculiar temperament, was to be expected, and is not therefore to be unqualifiedly condemned. Indeed, when under the influence of excitement in reference to any subject save religion, men are hurried into some excesses, there is no hesitation to make due allowance for them. But why make religion an exception? When it is viewed in all its bearings upon the weal or wo of man, both for time and eternity, who will affirm that it is not of a character to take a powerful hold upon a person of strong susceptibilities? Such a person was Mr. Sluyter: but the extremes to which in any instance he was carried,

did not militate against the genuineness of the revivals of religion with which the church of Claverack was blessed. That they were the work of God, is proved by the many living fruits of them by which it is now adorned and strengthened, as well as by the holy and useful lives of many who have "fallen asleep in Jesus."

CHAPTER V.

The light in which Mr. S. is presented as a preacher—Reputation as a preacher—His own justification of his course in serving the Church of Claverack—The Divine blessing attends it—Characteristics of his preaching—His description of himself—Pastoral qualifications—His description of himself—Attachment to his own church—Introduces two of his spiritual children into the ministry—Rev. B B. Westfall—His death—His resemblance to Mr. S.—Mr. Sluyter's comparative inefficiency in prosecuting works of benevolence—The cause of it—His own view of his success—Constituted his own biographer.

THE view which has been given of Mr. Sluyter's ministrations in the church of Claverack, exhibits him in the threefold light of a laborious, faithful and successful preacher. Some ministers are laborious, but are wanting in fidelity. Some are successful, as the result of the labours of their brethren. Some are faithful in proclaiming God's truth, but are neither laborious nor successful. Some blend with fidelity in declaring the whole counsel of God, untiring diligence in their work, and yet are permitted to see very few fruits of it. But

it is only occasionally one is seen in whose ministry these are combined. Indeed, with many the want of success apparently causes very little solicitude. They say, and say truly, that the promises of God are made to the faithful servant, and hence their acceptance with God, and their reward, are not suspended upon the fruits of their ministrations, be they few or many. It is written, and this suffices for them, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." This kind of reasoning, resting upon a scriptural basis, may be carried too far; and its effect may be both to diminish the sense of obligation to strive for the salvation of souls, and to cause the truth to be so presented to men, as to awaken in them scarcely any interest in regard to eternal things. For while it is proper (ministerial success being dependent upon the blessing of God) that the faithful servant should be rewarded, yet it is difficult to conceive how a minister can establish for himself this character, and still be indifferent as it respects being suc-

cessful. He is likened to a sower, and the seed which he sows is the word of God; but when the sower has deposited his seed in the prepared earth, does he, because its germinating and yielding fruit are results which God only can accomplish, feel no solicitude to receive a return for his labour in a bountiful harvest? He is also compared to a fisherman; and in this character he casts the gospel net: but does not the fisherman show concern, lest he may toil and catch nothing? He is also called an ambassador; and as such his business is to "beseech" men, "in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God:" but does an ambassador, in the execution of his highly responsible trust, discard from his mind all ideas of success, and aim at nothing beside being faithful? If then the sower, the fisherman and the ambassador, to whom the minister of the gospel is likened, while labouring faithfully in their respective vocations, keep constantly in view success, and in the hope and prospect of this find themselves stimulated and encou-

raged, how can ministers reconcile it to their consciences, their obligations, their relations, their characters, and the design of their commission to preach the gospel, to say they are concerned only about fidelity in their work? Are they sure that this can exist to the degree to entitle them to be received at last with the plaudit, "Well done good and faithful servant," provided they are not intent upon being successful? *So thought not Mr. Sluyter;* and the result has been summarily given in preceding chapters. As Abraham, when he had made supplication in behalf of Sodom and Gomorrah, to see what had been its success, "gat up early in the morning to the place where he had stood before the Lord, and looked toward Sodom and Gomorrah, and toward all the land of the plain," so Mr. Sluyter looked to see the truth, which he had preached, and for the success of which he had prayed and wept, take effect in the consciences and hearts of men, and to produce in them conformity to the will of God. Nor did he look in vain.

As a preacher, Mr. Sluyter did not occupy a prominent position in the public estimation, nor even the position to which he was justly entitled. This was in part owing to himself, as he concedes in a sermon which he preached on the anniversary of the twenty-fourth year of his ministry. Adverting to the sphere which he had been called by the church of Claverack to occupy, he says—"This course of daily duties, and almost daily preaching, seems to have arisen from the necessity of the case. The extent of the charge, and the wants of the people, presented calls faster than they could be reasonably answered; and I do frankly confess to you that I have frequently been constrained, under these circumstances, to neglect the preparation of my Sabbath exercises, contrary both to principle and inclination. And I am fully sensible that with respect to those who are ignorant of the labours and difficulties of the ministry, sufficient allowances have not been made for any short comings in these exercises. It would have been to

my interest, honour and ease, to have devoted my whole time to preparations for the pulpit, but numerous families and individuals in every section of the congregation, who were destitute of the means to come to church, presented their claims for lectures in their own neighbourhoods, and I have yielded to their wants and wishes beyond what might be considered in the opinion of some either my duty or interest." Doubtless, he did so yield; and yet the circumstances of the case were such, that where they are understood it is presumed that few will censure him for preaching too much, and being too much out of his study. He acted in view of facts, of which the most of those who think he ought to have confined himself more to his Sabbath performances are ignorant; and though to these, in some instances, he may have attached undue importance, yet situated as he was, it is believed that in the main his action was right. Beside, whatever may be thought of his laying less stress upon his reputation as a preacher than upon the

salvation of the flock whose oversight had been committed to him, it is certain that God in several, and memorable instances, set upon it the seal of his approval. "His sermons, which never drew forth the approbation of the multitude," with the blessing of God upon them, effected what is far more desirable, namely, the building up of christians on their most holy faith, and the conversion of sinners.

As it regards the distinguishing characteristics of Mr. Sluyter's preaching, they may be summed up in three words—plainness, directness and fervour. He never sought to wrap up his meaning in a multitude of words, and with a view to divest the truth of its native force and pungency. He never preached about his hearers, but at them.* He considered them as being each a candidate for eternity—as each possibly listening to the last message which

* An old elder, long since deceased, used to say, "the difficulty with Mr. Sluyter when he preaches, is, that it is just as if he says, you."

they might receive from his lips, and aimed to make the "truth as it is in Jesus," bear directly upon them. His own feelings also became so excited by the subjects which he discussed, the persons whom he addressed, and his knowledge that both he and they would soon be mingling in eternal scenes, that his manner and language were earnest and impassioned, and fixed the attention of his hearers. In fine, he seemed to realize that he was preaching for eternity, and had no time to "sugarcoat" the truth, to render it more palatable to the fastidious and vitiated taste of some of his hearers.

As, however, Mr. Sluyter has well described himself, in a charge which he delivered to the Rev. G. I. Garretson at the time of his ordination and installation over the church of Stuyvesant, it is preferred to let him, in his own words, give his idea of the style of preaching and the manner of performing the duty which is suited to the pulpit. He said: "But whatever duties, either public or private, call for your

attention in this great embassage, remember that you are not your own ; and as an incentive to setting the Lord Jesus Christ always before you, recollect that your work is not yours, but his that sent you. Be not afraid, therefore, to tell men of every description, of their total depravity by nature, and that they are lying under a dispensation of wrath while they are strangers to the love of Christ. Never be guilty of softening down the terrific denunciations of God's word for fear of leaving a gloomy impression upon the minds of your hearers, by telling them you hope better things of them, and things which accompany salvation, though you thus speak." But cease not to persecute the impenitent with the tempest, and make them afraid with the thunders and the storm of Sinai, until they repair to Mount Calvary and take refuge under the banners of the Saviour's cross. Maintain with fidelity the infinite perfections of God your Saviour, and oppose with promptitude and firmness any doctrine which militates against them.

Be not backward to preach the self-denying and humbling doctrines of free and sovereign grace, however unpalatable they may be to some, or whatever your faithfulness may cost you. Warn sinners boldly of every danger. Strive to displace the hypocrite from his false foundation, and the wicked from their 'refuges of lies.' Give them no peace until they are brought trembling and humbled at the feet of Jesus, collected and in their right mind; then, and not till then, apply the balm of Gilead to their wounded hearts, and lead them to the peaceful sanctuary of grace. In discharging these duties, remember that you are not at liberty to 'confer with flesh and blood.' The command of your Master is, Go preach the gospel, and wo unto you if you do it not." The foregoing is conceived to be a good description of Mr. Sluyter as a preacher—a description whose accuracy in its several parts will be discerned without effort by all who are familiar with his style and manner.

Before passing from the subject of Mr.

Sluyter as a preacher, it is proper to remark, that it was less by his preaching on the Sabbath, than by his lectures during the week, that he commended himself to the people. "He was never more elevated," observes Mr. Westfall, "than in the lecture-room or private house, where the neighbours were assembled. It was here that he would discourse of heaven and hell, and bring eternity near to the view of his hearers, while his own soul would yearn over sinners ready to perish."

But it is not simply in his character as a preacher, that we are called to contemplate Mr. Sluyter. He was also a pastor; and his success in "breaking the bread of life," was interwoven with the discharge of pastoral duties. That he possessed rare qualifications for their performance is undeniable. Few pastors have ever surpassed him in ability and tact to accommodate themselves to persons of all ranks and descriptions of character; to disarm them of all opposition, and to convince them of the solicitude

which he felt for them, especially in view of coming reckonings at the bar of God. Of this truth, the conviction will doubtless be deeper when the following, from the anniversary sermon before referred to, is read. "Entering the field, labour presented itself on every side. The living soul and the dead body pressed upon me a load of duty. Instructing the ignorant, directing the inquiring, comforting the sorrowful, and burying the dead, were among my daily employments. Most of you know after what manner I have been with you in these various duties. In seasons of affliction I have pressed you to the bosom of sympathy; in times of sore grief hushed the sigh of sorrow, and wiped the falling tear: and in all seasons, my willingness to be with you has been greater than my abilities. I have taught you publicly, and from house to house; and few that have attended my public instructions have escaped my private admonition and advice."

Preaching, lecturing and discharging pastoral duties, however, do not comprise

the whole of a minister's work. In addition, but yet in subordination to it, it is incumbent on him to coöperate with others in sustaining the cause of benevolence through the medium both of the institutions which his own church has originated, and also of those which are of a general character, and not in conflict either in design or operation with the former. For in churches, as in families, the principle holds good that provision must first be made for our own; but this does not necessarily restrict our benevolent feelings and efforts to our own denomination. And this truth was illustrated in the case of Mr. Sluyter. His attachment to his own church was strong and abiding, and was the result not merely of feeling, but also of conviction. Her doctrines, government and order, commended themselves to him, because he believed them to be conformable to the word of God. And in this fact we have the key to that self-sacrificing spirit which induced him, to an extent which is not usual, to merge his personal

feelings and interests in her welfare. Indeed, few ministers have exhibited in greater strength and fervour that "domestic feeling," which is requisite as well to the peace as the prosperity of a church.

As it regards his efforts to extend the church by new organizations, he says, in his anniversary sermon, "I have organized three Reformed Dutch churches under the direction of Classis, namely, Ghent, Hudson* and Mellenville, which have been raised principally by the influence and instrumentality of the ministry of this church; and the greater part of the members, by which they were originally constituted, were dismissed from this church."† Sub-

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* Second Church, Claverack.

† On the subject of organizing a church in Hudson, in May, 1835, Mr. Sluyter wrote as follows:—"The enterprize of a Reformed Dutch Church in Hudson, you have no doubt seen stated in the Christian Intelligencer. This, you remember, has been a subject long talked of by me, and we have spoken together about it. Since the thing was first started last winter, there have been several waning periods, in which the whole project was well nigh

sequently Mr. Sluyter became the leading agent in the establishment of the church of Chatham. Its pastor, the Rev. E. S. Porter, basing his testimony upon what he had learned verbally from members of the Classis, and also from Mr. S., says: "In the autumn of 1841, Mr. Sluyter, acting upon information which he received from Chatham, addressed a communication to the Rev. Classis of Rensselaer on the subject of establishing a missionary at this place, with the view to the erection of the church. The proposition did not fully meet the concurrence of Classis; and as Mr. Sluyter was unwell, and not able to attend the session of the body, a decisive measure was postponed until the next meeting. A committee of Classis was, however, appointed, of which Mr. Sluyter was chairman, to visit this place and report concerning the feasibility of the en-

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abandoned . . . . You would be quite surprised to hear how many, and who, are in favour of this undertaking in Hudson. I am pretty strong in the faith of their success."

terprise. At the meeting of the following spring, (1842,) the committee reported favourably. Some members of Classis still feared the failure of the proposed effort. But Mr. Sluyter, with others, were sanguine, and proposed that at least an effort be made, which was agreed upon." After stating that as the fruit of this effort, he was invited to commence his ministry there, that "the church was organized January 22d, 1843," and a church built and dedicated the following October, Mr. Porter adds: "And from the date of the completion of our building, this church has amply sustained the gospel, without any assistance from any foreign source. Much, under God, is undoubtedly due to the agency of Mr. Sluyter in this work."

In addition to organizing new churches, Mr. Sluyter was instrumental in inducing two of his spiritual children to devote themselves to the work of the gospel ministry. At the time of his death, one of them, the Rev. B. B. Westfall, had ceased from his work on earth, and was in daily

expectation of the summons "to depart and be with Christ, which is far better." He however lingered on, until the 27th of the following April, when he died. "He looked forward," it is said, "to his end with great composure, enjoying the presence of his Master, and a well-grounded hope of exchanging the earthly house of this tabernacle for a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."* In the spirit of fervid devotion to the work of preaching "Christ and him crucified," in fidelity in declaring the "whole counsel of God," and in the success which attended his ministrations, there were strong points of resemblance between him and Mr. Sluyter. The writer is the other individual whom Mr. Sluyter encouraged by his advice, by his personal influence and aid, in prosecuting studies with a view to the ministry. But of himself he may not speak.

In sustaining the benevolent institutions

* Christian Intelligencer, 18th May, 1844.

of the church, Mr. Sluyter did not fully meet the expectations of many who knew the resources which existed among his people. The reason of this was, neither want of interest in them, nor failure to perceive their connection with the extension and prosperity of the church. The former he felt, and the latter he clearly discerned. He knew also the value of system in conducting benevolent operations, and made sundry attempts at establishing it; but he was not himself a systematic man. Beside being in a high degree impulsive in his acts, he was not constant in adhering to the plans which he had formed, when their novelty ceased to attract the attention of the people, and their interest in them began to flag. Hence his comparative inefficiency in carrying forward among the people of his charge works of benevolence, having respect to the accomplishment of good through the medium of the institutions of his own church.

A like inefficiency characterized his ef-

forts in sustaining the cause of benevolence in its more general aspects. When it was presented to him, he embarked in it with his whole soul. He was literally "ready to every good work," and endeavoured to bring up the people to the proper standard of feeling and liberality. In his anniversary sermon he thus discoursed to them: "Every benevolent institution must secure your cordial support, especially the Sabbath School, the Tract, the Missionary, Bible, and Temperance Societies. Christians are bound to cherish in their hearts a kind and faithful regard to these institutions, and to go on to their support, and to the support of the gospel at home, as though the spring of action was in their own breasts, and not alone in the motion of their pastor."

Notice has already been taken of the fact that Mr. Sluyter never sought notoriety for himself, by publishing to the world what God, through his agency effected, in saving the lost. Some, perhaps, may wish to know how he felt, in view of

the blessing of God upon his ministrations, and the means to gratify them are at hand. In his anniversary sermon, after giving an account of his labours and their results, he says: "But the estimate of success must be referred to the great day of retribution. 'In the time of harvest God will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn.' If there should be one that has received his religious impressions, and has been brought to embrace the Lord Jesus Christ by my ministry, I am more than compensated for all the labour which I have performed in this part of the vineyard. Yes, it was indeed worth while that I should be brought into being, and placed in this holy office, if my Redeemer has been pleased to use my feeble, unskilful hand, to save one soul from eternal wo. This is a more noble and truly benevolent work than to save an empire from the heaviest temporal bondage. No earthly trouble or calamity can equal the misery of a

soul that has no God, and no temporal prosperity, though it be the possession of the whole world, with all its glory, can compensate the loss of the soul.

"If there be some reason to hope that a degree of success has attended my ministerial labours in this region, the glory belongs to Him who 'commanded the light to shine out of darkness,' for it has been amid many discouraging circumstances. I have hoped against hope for success, and toiled against a mighty tide of opposition."

A brief sketch has now been given of the life of Mr. Sluyter, in its connection with the discharge of his official duties as the servant of God in the gospel of his Son. In it, the aim has been, as far as this was practicable, to make him his own biographer; and he appears to the more advantage in this character, because he never had an idea of assuming it. To present himself and his labours to posterity in a favourable point of view, could not therefore have been his object in what has been spread out on preceding pages. And

the writer, in his own remarks, has endeavoured to guard against acting the part of the mere eulogist. He holds in grateful remembrance his spiritual father and friend, and "elder brother in the Lord," but is persuaded that he never could have obtained his consent to set before the public a one-sided view of his ministerial character and acts, and to ascribe to him excellencies and perfections of which he himself had no consciousness. Beside, the attempt to do this could not fail to be unsuccessful, especially as far as the people are concerned, to whom for twenty-eight years he had "gone preaching the kingdom of God." They "know from the first day that" he "came into Claverack, after what manner" he was "among them at all seasons."

CHAPTER VI.

Mr. S. in the walks of private life—As a companion and friend—As a husband and father—Proof that he took a proper interest in the well-being of his children.

It remains that our attention be directed to Mr. Sluyter in the walks of private life. And there is the more need of this, because the character, temper, sentiments and feelings of a man cannot be correctly inferred from his public official acts. Many things may combine to make him assume abroad, what at home, or among intimate friends he disregards, or even treats with contempt. His place, its honours and emoluments, and his influence to a greater or less degree, depend upon the light in which he presents himself to others in the execution of his trust. Hence, what he does, may be done "to be seen of men," and with the express purpose of retaining their favour and confidence. To estimate men aright, therefore, we must pass with

them from the scenes where it is possible, yea, probable, that selfish considerations are often the basis of action, to those in which their influence ceases to be felt, and they unmask and exhibit themselves as they are. For they cannot always, and in all places, so wear their disguise, as to hide from others their true character, and the motives which actuate them. Accordingly, when in public our minds are favourably impressed in their behalf, usually we desire to know, whether in retirement they sustain the same character, and give like cause for our approval of their doings. The lawfulness and propriety of this desire, as it regards Mr. Sluyter, is conceded, and the endeavour will be made to gratify it.

In his private and social relations and intercourse he was frank, dignified and courteous. He was agreeable as a companion, and devoted as a friend. He was, beside, unsuspicious, and possessed in large measure that "charity which thinketh no evil," and hence was sometimes

imposed upon by what was the bare resemblance of these things in others, and too readily, as he learned by painful experience, admitted them to his fellowship and confidence. And to his disposition to rely upon what in men appeared to be sincerity and honour, and friendship and affection, some of his severest trials are traceable. It is due to him, however, to say, that in his private and social intercourse with others, he never lost sight of what became him as the minister of Jesus Christ, nor failed, as occasion offered, to display his concern for their salvation.

In his domestic relations, he was the common centre of attraction to his household, and lived and acted under a sense of his responsibility; and while he aimed to make provision for their comfortable maintenance, he forgot not that their spiritual and eternal interests were measurably committed to his keeping. As a husband, in person, in address, in "qualities of head and heart," he was such as endeared him to the partner of his life, its cares and its

duties. He gave "honour to the wife, as to the weaker vessel;" consulted her interest, comfort and happiness; counselled, aided and encouraged her in her domestic and maternal avocations; sympathized with her, and solaced her in seasons of affliction, and practically taught her the lesson of submission to the will of God. As a father, he took an enlarged view of his duty; and of him it cannot be said, that while he was anxious for the salvation of others, he overlooked his own children and domestics. He regarded himself as their teacher and guide; and believing that well-ordered communities and prosperous churches are the fruits of carefully instructed and wisely governed families, he strove to "command his children and his household after him." In fine, he practically recognised the truth, that, through the medium of the parental relation, God designs that children shall be trained up for usefulness on earth and happiness in heaven. He did not, therefore, suppose with some that his only business

was to educate his children for the several stations to which, in this life, they were destined or might be called. Important as he considered this work, and zealously as he laboured to effect it, he yet held it to be subordinate to that of teaching them "the fear of the Lord."

In proof of the foregoing remarks, and to show how on various occasions he displayed his interest in them, and in what affected them for good or evil, and urged them to make God their trust, some extracts from his letters will now be given. To a son who had recently left the paternal home, he writes, "I sincerely hope, and it is my daily prayer, that you will be as faithful as time, and honest as the golden rule, and that you may grow in habits of virtue and piety. Try, my son, to be useful where you are. Be kind and obedient in your station, social in your disposition, and polite in your manners. It pleased me to learn that you followed my advice about reading a chapter in the Bi-

ble every night. Do not forget to pray that the reading may be blessed to you."

To the same son, in another letter, he says, "You must often reflect upon the old family altar around which you have so frequently bowed the knee of devotion, and the many prayers which have been offered to God for your spiritual and temporal interests. Indeed, when the thought arises in my mind, in connection with the distance by which we are now separated, I am moved with feelings of tenderness, and the tear of parental sensibility starts in my eyes. I hope, my dear son, that you will cherish a deep sense of your dependence on God, and feel your need of religion. It is necessary to your real comfort in this world. It will preserve you from a thousand snares, and save you from temptations. It is the only consolation in the hour of affliction, and the only hope in the hour of death. Yes, the hour of death should be kept in view always. The king of terrors is prowling for his prey every where, and none can escape

his desolating stroke. We cannot begin too early to prepare to meet God. May the Lord help you to feel a sense of sin, and to forsake it, and give your heart to him."

When this son had taken up his residence in New-York, he wrote again, "I hope you are pleased with your situation, and that you may improve, and become an accomplished clerk and a man of business. I suppose Mr. ——— is a very strict and particular man. This is the very man to make good clerks, and fit them for business. If you should be found fault with, do not resent it, or appear cross or pouty. Nothing is so hateful as such a disposition. Never let either Mr. ———, or the clerks above you, find fault with you the second time for the same thing. Try to gain the confidence of your principal, and this will gain for you promotion, and consequently advantage."

Again, on sending him some new clothes, he says, "Do not forget, my son, that a good character is a better ornament to you

than fine clothes. Therefore keep this in mind, and above all, seek a character with God."

Again, he writes, "I hope you may always entertain a high sense of virtue and honour, and aim to cultivate the one and exemplify the other, in all your dealings and intercourse with your fellow creatures. Your character will be the sheet anchor of your hope of success and prosperity in this world; and, I trust, you have heard enough of me, and observed enough in the course of others, to shun every evil way, and maintain a conscience void of offence toward God and toward men."

When this son had, by a somewhat rapid promotion, "succeeded to the first station in the clerkship of the store," he addressed him thus: "I hope, most sincerely, that you may have wisdom enough to retain the continued confidence of your employer, and be as faultless as the frailty of human nature will admit. You know that your prospects in life depend on your character and standing in society. Be as

attentive, and more so, than you ever were. Our responsibility always increases with the increase of our standing and influence in the world. 'Unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required.'"

To another son he writes, "Perhaps I am more solicitous than I ought to be, about my children's welfare and prosperity in this world, and not enough about their future salvation. I am anxious about the one and the other. The latter is infinitely more important than the former, and ought to be the first and great concern of life; and it is my daily prayer to God that you may be converted and made a child of his family and an heir of his kingdom."

In a letter in which he speaks particucularly of the blessing of God upon his ministrations, as this was displayed in the conversion of men, he remarks:

"When I am engaged in this labour for the good of souls, I often think of my own dear children, especially of you and ——,

removed from these scenes of religious excitement, and say to myself, Oh that I could hear of their conversion to God! when will they repent and yield up their hearts to the Lord? Now, my children, is the accepted time for you. Oh, embrace the golden days of youth, and these blessed means of grace, to secure an interest in the Lord Jesus Christ."

To his oldest daughter, subsequently to her marriage, he expresses his views respecting her duties in the following appropriate terms: "You will find a very different state of life in your advanced relations, to what you were previously acquainted with. When you lived with your parents, mingling with your brothers and sisters, you felt that you was but as one of the children; and as such, you involuntarily leaned upon your parents, like all children, and expected that every thing would be said and done for you. 'You thought as a child, and understood as a child;' but now your relations have chan-

ged; responsibilities devolve upon you as Mrs. ———. They are domestic and social, civil and religious. They must be met with punctuality, with suavity, with patience and perseverance, and will require the adoption of principle and the arrangement of system, if you would establish the desirable character of consistency in the varied relations and intercourse of life. But however methodical and prompt you may be in your views, and resolute in your determination to do well, you must remember that you need the grace of God daily, and that without him you can do nothing. May he constantly 'work in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.' And may you and your dear husband live together in peace and love, and be eminently useful in your day."

To the same daughter and her husband, on the birth of their first child, he thus wrote:—"I present you my most sincere congratulations in the gift which Providence has bestowed upon you, even the gift of a lovely little daughter, and the ad-

dition of a new relation to your earthly state, even that of parents. This is a relation that cannot be sustained without feeling it. It is one that takes hold of the heart, and can better be experienced than described. I hope you may, as father and mother, be able to realize the great weight of this relation, as it relates to time and eternity, and be suitably qualified to bear the solemn responsibilities thereof."

Again, after they had buried a dear child, he endeavoured as follows to act the part of 'a comforter of the mourners':—"You have, no doubt, occasional emotions of grief when your dear departed child comes up to your memory, and this is every day, and many times in the day, but I trust you consider the Providence, and try to improve it. 'Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?' was the reasoning of patient Job, when labouring under the afflictive providence of God. Surely we ought not to chide or find fault with the dealings of his righteous

hand upon us, for the Judge of all the earth cannot do but what is right. The trial teaches you to be more humble, more holy and faithful in Christian duty; to live under a daily sense of the uncertainty of life and all earthly enjoyments. Consider how much better this dear babe might be spared, or more easily given up than others of your little family; and though it is hard to part with him, yet it is comforting to know that he is happy, and mingles with the spirits of the blessed in heaven, and would say, could he speak to you now, 'Weep not for me, but for yourselves.'"

The following brief extract is from a letter addressed to a son-in-law. It is given, because it shows that he knew how to appreciate the Divine wisdom and goodness in the constitution of those diversified, intimate and endearing relations, which are the fruitful source of much of the comfort and enjoyment which are found among men. He says, "The world is linked together very strangely, by ties of consanguinity and affinity. How wise

and good is the Divine Being, in implanting a principle of nearness and affection where they exist. May grace cement every tie of nature, and all our relatives be kindred of the Lord."

CHAPTER VII.

Disease of which Mr. S. dies, begins to be developed in October, 1842—His anticipations respecting its probable issue—Continues in the discharge of his duties until January, 1843—Preaches a full sermon in June following—Death of a grandchild—Its effect upon him—His disease erroneously pronounced to be dyspepsia—Account of its progress—His view of his affliction—His appearance on a communion occasion—Travels—Apparent advantage of this—Goes to Saratoga—Unexpected return—Death—Disease, "Cancer of the stomach"—During the progress of his disease is a great sufferer—His carriage amid his sufferings—His concern about his family—His doubts—Their removal—Takes leave of his family—Closing scene—Conclusion—Action of the Classis of Rensselaer.

In October, 1842, Mr. Sluyter began to experience the painful effects of the disease which carried him to his grave. At the time, he was on his way to Hillsdale, to preach. How long previously it had existed in his system in a state of gradual developement, is not known. When he returned home he was quite unwell, and not long after, was in the night violently attacked by what was then supposed to be bilious colic. In November, the symptoms of his disease became more alarming to him, and he seriously thought that the pe-

riod of his ministry was about to close. On the 14th of the month, in a letter to his son, he says, "But I do not wish you to feel any alarm on my account. I am in hopes that this bilious attack may pass over, as you know I am subject to them, and have from time to time been relieved. Yet we should all be prepared for the worst, as the time of separation cannot be very far distant. May you all be brought under the bonds of covenant love, and be more the Lord's than your own." Seven days afterward he wrote to a son-in-law, as follows:—"I have had it strongly in mind to visit you this fall, but the numerous cares and business daily occurring, prevented me during the month of September and the first part of October. Since I have not been well enough to leave home for such a journey. I have been labouring under a torpor of the liver for some time past, and it has rather increased upon me of late; not so as to diminish my exercises as yet, but I am sometimes apprehensive that I shall not be able to con-

tinue in the ministry many years, if my life should be spared." Meanwhile, though conscious that he was a prey to disease, he yet continued in the discharge of his duties. On the 10th of January, 1843, when his strength was on the point of giving way, he wrote to a son, "My own health remains very much as it was when you and James were home. If anything, I am sometimes encouraged to hope that I am better, although my digestive organs are still deranged, and I experience almost an entire loss of appetite. I still continue to be about, and have thus far preached every Sabbath at least once." When he penned these lines he was expecting to hear of the death of a little grandson who had been named after him, and toward whom the affections of his heart seem to have been drawn out in all their strength and fervour. On Saturday, January 13, his corpse was brought up from New-York by his afflicted father and deposited in the parsonage. The next day Mr. S. preached for the last time in regular succession. Nor did he ever

afterward, except on one occasion, preach a full sermon, and that was on a Sabbath in June following. The classical supply* did not on that day fulfil his appointment, and he discoursed to the people from John, 15th chapter and 14th verse, "Ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I command you."

The funeral of his grandson took place from the parsonage on the afternoon of January 14th. "This providence was a shock to his feelings to which, perhaps, may be ascribed his sudden prostration of mind and body. He never after spake of this darling boy without emotion and evident sorrow. On the morrow, after the funeral obsequies, he kept his bed and sent for his medical attendant. From this time it was manifest that the strong man was sinking. He lost his wonted relish for

* During a part of the time that Mr. Sluyter was laid aside from his labours, the congregation supplied the pulpit, and the rest of the time the Classis made arrangements for this purpose.

society, sought retirement, and in his study shut out for a season from the world's intercourse, he held close communion with his Maker, reviewed his ministry and prayed for his flock and family."

During the most of the remainder of the winter he continued in the house. A number of physicians were consulted respecting the nature of his disease, and they were almost unanimous in the opinion that it was dyspepsy, and prescribed accordingly. On his part were brought into requisition all the resolution and energy which were left, to take such exercise as was recommended. He sawed wood, and rode both on horseback and in his carriage; and yet his appetite did not return, nor was his strength recruited. All the while he lost flesh rapidly. His physicians, however, encouraged him to hope that the return of warm weather and travel would restore to him that priceless boon, health; and in March, he wrote to a son, "Since my last communication, my health, compared with the account then

given, is rather favourable. I am still very thin in flesh, but in the general aspect more inclined to recovery; but the bettering must, from the state and circumstances of the case, be gradual." To a son-in-law, at a later date in the same month, he wrote, "I have been almost wholly confined to the house since the 14th of January. I have not preached since, and when I shall be able to do so, is at present uncertain. It is not likely that I shall very soon. The church has been supplied by the different ministers of the Classis, who have been very kind and accommodating in my adversity. This is truly a dark and mysterious providence both to myself and family, and the church in this place. What can the Lord design by this afflictive dispensation? To teach us all to withhold our trust from an arm of flesh, and look to God for help and direction, both in temporal and eternal concerns. O that the trial may be sanctified to me and my family, and to the congregation; and that it may be good for us to

be afflicted. The doctor says that I am not in immediate danger, and that I am actually getting in a better state, and when the warm weather opens, I shall probably recover."

In the foregoing extract, Mr. Sluyter speaks of his affliction as "a dark and mysterious providence," as it respected himself and family, and the church. He seems to have been specially exercised as it regarded the purpose of God in it with reference to the church; and in writing to a son, after saying, "There is a great stir in religion at Mellenville, and also at Johnstown," he adds: "An awful judgment rests upon this church. The lips of their pastor are sealed; and the means of grace almost entirely suspended. Truly God hath a controversy with us as minister and people. Oh that I might feel more humble, believe more confidently, and submit more cheerfully to the Lord's will, and that this people might turn unto him that smiteth them."

To the father of his deceased grandson,

in a letter written in April, he says, "You have heard from time to time how it has been with me for a few months past; how I am changed from a healthful, vigorous man to a feeble hypochondriac or dyspeptic, unable to do scarce any thing. I have not preached since the solemn day that you spent with us when dear little Richard was consigned to the grave." The people, generally, not having seen him after he ceased to meet them regularly in the sanctuary, had no conception of the alteration which, in a couple of months had taken place in his appearance. And when on the communion Sabbath in March, just before the elements were distributed, he entered the church, "all eyes were fixed on his pallid face, heretofore overspread when within its doors with the hue of health. His visage spake in monitory language to the living, and what the eye beheld affected the heart."

About the middle of May, in compliance with the advice of physicians, and the wishes of friends, he left home to visit his

children in New-York, and Patterson, N. J. But with them he did not tarry long; and on his return to Claverack, his family and others thought he was somewhat improved in health and spirits. Soon, however, favourable symptoms disappeared; and to his wife he one day remarked, "When it was cold, the doctors said warm weather would benefit me; now it is warm, they say I must wait for cold weather, so neither will do it."

As the only alternative, it was resolved that he should again leave home; and the means for the purpose were provided by "a few generous friends." His first intention was to go to the sea-side, but "a medical friend urged a change of purpose, judging him too feeble to bear sea air or bathing, and proposed the springs." Accordingly, on the morning of the 12th of July, accompanied by a friend and his youngest son, he started for Saratoga, where he arrived about five o'clock, P. M. The next day he wrote to his wife, "This long journey in one day very much fa-

tigued me; and had I been free from disease, rest would have been very sweet last night; but disease destroys life and its enjoyments. I took pretty freely of the Congress waters last night: the flavour is very delightful to me, but what will be the effect I have yet to experience. I do not know that I am any worse than when I left home; perhaps the journey has increased my strength." The following day he again addressed a brief note to Mrs. Sluyter, in which he says: "As the benefit of my health is the sole object of my being here, the experiment is not yet complete. My stomach was not in a proper state to receive the waters. That bloating and tenseness of the abdomen which caused me so much distress for more than a week before I left home, became intolerable on the next morning after drinking this water, so that I was obliged to send for a physician for advice as to its use, and of course I have had to undergo another revolution of purging by salts and magnesia, which made me very sick yesterday.

To-day I am some better, having been thoroughly evacuated, and drank two bottles of the Congress water this morning before breakfast; but, notwithstanding, the soreness and bloating continue to a certain extent. If spared, I wish to continue some days longer and make a fair trial. I have not been in the baths as yet. I have a hope that the warm bath of these medicinal waters may help me. I am waiting to see the doctor on the subject."

His expectations from the warm baths were not realized. "The swelling of his extremities and bowels commenced in a warm bath;" and his physician, Dr. Freeman, advised him immediately to return to his family. By them his arrival was not expected; and the altered appearance of his outward man, when he got out of the carriage at his own door, led his wife anxiously to ask, "Dear, but what does this mean?" he faintly replied, "the waters have developed a new disease." After he was seated in the house he remarked,

"This is the man who has been called nervous, hypochondriacal. Is there not disease about me?" From this time he lingered on in constant and distressing pain, which neither the skill of physicians, who did not fully understand the nature of his disease, nor the sympathy and kind attentions of his family and friends had power to alleviate, until the 25th of July, when he departed this life.*

The progress of Mr. Sluyter's disease, until its termination in his death, has now been traced. Meanwhile he was a great sufferer; cried out on one occasion, "O, my life is a burden to me;" and at all times might have appropriately expressed himself in the words of Job, "Have pity upon me, have pity upon me, O ye my friends, for the hand of God hath touched me." But how, during the protracted sea-

* A post mortem examination was held, which showed that "the disease which was the immediate cause of his death, was a scirrhus, or cancer of the stomach, extending over every part of it, from the cardia to the pylorus."

son of his affliction, did he bear himself? Did he illustrate in practice the truth which he had preached, and often used to comfort others, when he found himself gradually but certainly sinking into the grave? Was it verified in him that "patience worketh experience and experience hope?" and did he "rejoice in hope of the glory of God?" Some, as they read over the brief record of his life and labours, may, in advance conclude that a servant of God so distinguished for his fidelity and success, must have enjoyed very special manifestations of the divine presence and favour. Like many of "the children of the kingdom," however, he was left without anything resembling an ecstacy of joy. But though indulged with no transporting visions of future glory, yet he was permitted and enabled to plant himself immoveably upon the "Rock of Ages," and confidently to expect that he would say to him, "Come up hither, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

When first he ceased from his labours, and indeed during the whole winter, he felt much solicitude about his family, and gave himself up to desponding fears as it respected the means necessary to their comfortable support. In reference to this state of feeling, he wrote: "It has been a hard and melancholy winter with me, and one of great trial in regard to condition and circumstances." About these things his concern was excessive, and while it lasted no doubt prejudicial to his spiritual peace. Hence, until it was removed, there continued to be more or less of haze thrown over all his prospects for eternity. He could not rise to "assurance of hope" respecting them. This is evident from the following extract of a letter to a son-in-law. He remarks: "In respect to our moral state, it is a truth well established in the experience of all the Lord's people that they know not how little faith they have, until they are tried. When the candle of the Lord shines upon our head, or we enjoy days of worldly prosperity, we

fancy that our mountain stands strong, and that by his light thus enjoyed, we can walk through darkness; but when darkness comes, we find that we need something more illuminating than the sparks which we have kindled, and by which we have compassed ourselves about. Even the believer, in the near prospect of death and judgment, has nothing whereof to glory, but much to fear, lest a promise being left him of entering into God's rest, he should even seem to come short of it. I found this to be emphatically my case. Although the Lord's promises are exceeding great and precious, yet they must be received—of their truth we must be persuaded. They must be embraced and rested on, or it cannot be said that our 'faith is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen.' Afflictions and troubles lead us to the reflex act of faith—a looking back upon former experience, to see all the exercises of our first love, and to examine ourselves indeed, whether we are in the

faith. No direct exercise of faith can be comfortable, unless it grow out of the reflex act as its root and source. So far as it relates to my own case, I think that all things are well in view of my acceptance with God, although I am not unsolicitous about it, but aim to press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God. I know that the righteous will be but scarcely saved, and why should I vaunt myself in an assurance which savours not of things that be of God, but those that be of men? My great concern has been about my dependent family, should I be taken from them; but I do most confidently trust them to the guidance of a merciful and righteous providence, relying implicitly upon those of them who have come to years of maturity to be an example and advisers to the rest."

As, however, Mr. Sluyter drew nearer to his end, his confidence in the gracious promises of God to the widow and the fatherless waxed stronger; and he intimated that his great distress in behalf of his fa-

mily had entirely passed away. His views respecting his own interest in Christ also became more clear, and he spake confidently of having "in heaven a better and an enduring substance." A few days before his death he entered upon a conversation with his wife respecting his expected speedy separation from her, the increased cares and responsibilities which, in consequence, would devolve upon her, in reference to the younger children; his concern for his family; what he thought was due to them from the church for his devotion to its interests. When she asked him if he had any anxiety about himself, he replied, "O, my dear, I have no anxiety in regard to myself; the interests of my soul have been secured long ago." Then he added: "How much do I owe to sovereign grace, which arrested me when a young man, in my course of folly. Let us magnify the grace which not only saved me, but honoured me, by placing me in the gospel vineyard to save others. I might have pursued a profession (that of

medicine) in which I might have laid up a patrimony for my family, but I rejoice now that I have spent my time on earth as I have."

On the Thursday preceding his death, he took a formal leave of the children who were then at home; counselled and admonished them individually; recommended them to go to the Saviour for help, to do what he had enjoined upon them, and gave them his blessing. In the course of his remarks on this occasion, with evident emotion he said, "It is painful to leave a helpless family, but for me to die will be gain." When to console him, his wife reminded him that it is written, "Leave your fatherless children, I will preserve them alive; and let thy widows trust in me;" and that she could plead the promises which have respect to the fatherless and widows, he said, "Yes, but I fear your faith will fail you when you are called to put it into exercise. It is easier to talk of what you can do at my side, than to do it when you are left alone in the

world: and these children, they are not in personal covenant possession of these promises." Then addressing them, he said, "You must seek a covenant right yourselves to them."

On the next day, from 12 o'clock, A. M. his sufferings were excruciating, and it was supposed that he was in his death struggle. Then was seen the triumph of grace over nature. Though naturally impatient and irritable in sickness, yet now he "let patience have her perfect work." Not a murmur escaped his lips, when, to get relief from pain, he was in constant motion, either changing his position, or walking across the room leaning on his two eldest sons, and occasionally exclaiming, "O, my boys, I am a great trouble to you." Once, and only once, "being in an agony," he piteously asked, "O, where shall rest be found?" and when his wife responded, "Rest is found; it is only your body that is wearied with pain," he quickly said, "yes, yes."

On the Sabbath, the Rev. John Grey,

of Schodack, preached to his people; and when he called upon Mr. Sluyter and inquired respecting his spiritual interests, he answered, "O, brother Grey, those interests were secured long ago. It is a poor time to make our peace with God in a dying hour, and a death-bed is a poor place to begin such a work."

On Monday evening his children from Buffalo arrived. He expressed himself glad to see them, and after a few brief inquiries about them and their family, he said, "I cannot talk to you to-night, to-morrow I will." But he conversed with them no more. He was then finishing the last day of his pilgrimage on earth; and when early on Tuesday morning his children were aroused from their slumbers, and summoned to his dying bed, he had lost the power of speech, and could only by a nod signify his recognition of them. It was thus also that he replied affirmatively to his wife's inquiry, "Is it peace?" Then followed "a little gasping," and the work of death was accom-

plished. The tears and sobs of his family, which before he had requested might neither be shed nor heard in his presence, now moved him not; and doubtless if his departing spirit could have been permitted to pause in its heavenward flight to speak to the mourners, he would have addressed them in the words of Christ to the daughters of Jerusalem—"Weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children."

The history of Mr. Sluyter's life and labours has now been traced to its conclusion. It is necessarily imperfect, from the want of materials to do full justice to it; yet it is believed that a faithful outline of it is given. From this, something like a just estimate of Mr. Sluyter may be formed. He made no pretensions to being faultless, and a claim to this effect has not been set up in his behalf. He was descended from parents whose respectability and moral worth are unquestionable, and, as a son and brother, was dutiful and affectionate, and contributed effectually toward the

comforts and pleasures of the family circle. As a man, in person and in the qualities which in the domestic and social relations throw a charm around their possessor, he was distinguished above many. As a husband and father, he had enlarged views of the nature and extent of his duties, and conscientiously endeavoured to discharge them. As a Christian, his piety was genuine, intelligent, fervent and controlling in its influence over his feelings, his purposes and his acts. As a preacher of the gospel, his attainments, both in extent and variety, were such as enabled him to hold a respectable position in the Church of Christ, and to be useful to a degree which falls to the lot of comparatively few of his brethren. "In labours," he was "abundant," and in fidelity, both to God, who had called him to the work of the ministry, and to the people, whose "servant for Jesus' sake" he became, he was eminent. He "shunned not to declare the whole counsel of God." Meantime, with his fidelity he blended affectionate

tenderness in his address, and earnestness in his manner. As the colleague of the venerable Gebhard, he "honoured the head of the old man," and studiously avoided those things which might prevent an interchange of sympathy and counsel in their united efforts to "fulfil the whole work of the gospel ministry." As a pastor, he had rare qualifications. He could enter into the spirit of the apostle's words—"Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep." Whether he "sat as a comforter of the mourners," or sympathized with the afflicted, or pointed anxious inquirers to Jesus Christ, or exhorted Christians to "give diligence to make their calling and election sure," or warned the careless, slumbering sinner of his danger, and urged him to "flee from the wrath which is to come," he seldom failed to commend himself and his discourse to each of them. In the death of Mr. Sluyter, therefore, society and the church, as well as his family, sustained a

loss, which, if it be not irreparable, is assuredly not easily made good.

The following extract from the minutes of the Classis of Rensselaer, of which, at the time of his death, Mr. Sluyter was the oldest member, will show the estimation in which he was held by his brethren of the Classis.

" Whereas it has pleased Almighty God to remove by death our beloved brother, the Rev. Richard Sluyter; this Classis deem it due to the memory of one so long associated with us in the counsels and labours of the church, to record our affectionate remembrance of his varied excellencies as a man, a Christian, and a minister. While considering his removal, in the maturity of his powers, as a calamity to the Church of God, (although to him great gain,) they bow in humble acquiescence to the will of God, and are consoled by the

assurance that our departed brother will, by the Faithful and True Witness, be numbered with those who turned many to righteousness, and shall shine as stars for ever and ever.

Resolved, That this Classis sympathize with the afflicted relict and her fatherless children, in the bereavement they have suffered, in the removal of a kind and affectionate husband and parent.

Resolved, That the stated clerk be directed to transmit a copy of the above resolutions to the family of the deceased, and forward this report for publication in the Christian Intelligencer.

Attest,

A. N. KITTLE, *Stated Clerk.*

END.

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